

TIMELINES

JANUARY 8 – FEBRUARY 7, 2009

JOHN CARSON

James W. and Lois I.

RICHMOND CENTER for Visual Arts

Albertine Monroe-Brown Gallery
Gwen Frostic School of Art
College of Fine Arts
Western Michigan University

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RICHMOND CENTER for Visual Arts

Gwen Frostic School of Art
Western Michigan University
1903 W. Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

GALLERY HOURS

Monday–Thursday	10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
Friday	10:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m.
Saturday	12:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m.

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WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Art Direction: Tricia Hennessy, Design: M. Secco and M. Laham, The Design Center, School of Art, Western Michigan University



Geraldine, Video detail from *Timelines: 1976-2008*

My artistic practice and my work as an educator are motivated by a belief in the power and necessity of art whilst also wishing to examine and question its definitions. My own work has involved the exploration of various media, contexts and strategies. Different ideas have required different forms and approaches and often taken me into new and unknown territories. In each case I look for the most appropriate and effective form through which to convey an idea.

For me art has always been a form of exploration, inquiry and experiment; in a (sometimes vain) attempt to gain some better understanding of the wonders, mysteries horrors and absurdities of life and the everyday. Art operates as a civilizing force within society. I believe that it is not just a form of expression but also a form of communication. Throughout my career I have sought to find ways of conveying contemporary art ideas to a wider audience.

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During 1975 and 1976 I visited friends and relations, in and around Belfast, and photographed them in their homes. The photographs were placed on a map of the area to create an artwork depicting a social network of connections and relationships, which crossed geographical, religious and political divisions.

Around thirty years later, I decided to revisit this network of friends, and to speak with as many people as I could, about their experiences of life across those three decades. I wanted to give voices to faces from the original Friend Map and through peoples' stories, reflect on 'middle age' and consider how life experiences compared to youthful aspirations.

The resulting artwork, entitled *Timelines*, is a compilation of extracts from video interviews with 42 people, still living in the greater Belfast area.

Whilst the work has a particular Northern Irish perspective, it simply describes the job of living a life, and many of the themes explored connect individual experiences with universal concerns, as people reflect on their ambitions, achievements, highs, lows, loves, losses, hopes and fears.

What comes through particularly is the resilience, ready humor and humanity which enabled people to come through thirty years of fear, intimidation and violence to a point of tentative hope for a peaceful future in Northern Ireland.



Aunt Sophie, Video detail from *Timelines: 1976-2008*